

Deseronto Public Library

Policy type: Human Resources

Policy Number: HR 08

Policy Title: Prevention of Workplace Violence

Policy Approval Date: January 31 2018

Last Review/Revision Date: May 2019

Year of Next Review: 2020



This policy addresses the prevention of workplace violence as part of the Deseronto Public Library Board's responsibility for worker health and safety under the ***Occupational Health and Safety Act***.

Violent behaviour in the workplace is unacceptable from anyone including staff, members of the board, volunteers, clients, and others who do business with the library. Individuals who violate this policy may be removed from library property, and in the case of employees, are subject to disciplinary action including termination.

Section 1: Definition

1. The Deseronto Public Library recognizes the definition of violence as set out in the ***Occupational Health and Safety Act***. Workplace violence means:

- a) the exercise of physical force by a person against a worker, in a workplace, that causes or could cause physical injury to the worker,
- b) an attempt to exercise physical force against a worker, in a workplace, that could cause physical injury to the worker,
- c) a statement or behaviour that it is reasonable for a worker to interpret as a threat to exercise physical force against the worker, in a workplace, that could cause physical injury to the worker

2. **Violence in the workplace may include:**

- a) verbally threatening to attack a worker
- b) leaving threatening notes or sending threatening e-mails to the workplace
- c) shaking a fist in a worker's face
- d) hitting or trying to hit a worker
- e) throwing or kicking an object
- f) sexual aggression against a worker

3. **Violence in the library or on library property also includes:**

- a) intentionally or recklessly damaging of the property of another person
- b) intentionally causing alarm
- c) recklessly creating a risk by fighting
- d) creating a hazardous condition or danger by recklessly engaging in conduct which creates a substantial risk of serious physical injury
- e) intentionally placing or attempting to place another person in fear of imminent serious physical injury
- f) wielding a weapon

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Section 2: Responsibility and Response

1. The CEO or designate must develop and maintain a workplace violence program. See Appendix A.
The program will set out:
 - a) a process for assessing the risk of violence in the workplace
 - b) measures to control risk including those from domestic violence
 - c) procedures for reporting incidents of violence
 - d) the process for dealing with, and investigating, violent incidents and complaints.
2. All reports will be thoroughly investigated by the CEO or designate.
3. Physical or sexual assault or threat of physical violence will be reported to the police.
4. The library will provide staff with information on the risk of violence in the library and training workshops on a periodic basis addressing concerns such as “dealing with difficult people.”
5. Anyone experiencing or witnessing imminent danger or actual violence involving weapons or personal injury should call the police.
6. Workplace violence should be reported immediately to the most senior staff member available.
7. Employees are encouraged to report behaviour that they reasonably believe poses a potential for violence as described above.
8. The Deseronto Public Library, at the request of an employee, or at its own discretion, may prohibit members of the public, including family members, from seeing an employee on library property in cases where the employee suspects that an act of violence will result from an encounter with said individual(s).
9. This policy will be:
 - a) reviewed annually by the board
 - b) posted in the staff room along with the Violence Prevention Program – See Appendix A
 - c) posted on the library’s website

Section 3: Confidentiality and False Reports

1. All investigations shall be conducted in strict confidence to the extent possible. Documents will be stored in the Human Resources cabinet and access to these records will be restricted.

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2. Employees who are found to have made false or malicious complaints will be subject to disciplinary action.

Related Documents:

Deseronto Public Library – *OP- 02 Safeties, Security and Emergency*

Occupational Health and Safety Act R.S.O. 1990, CHAPTER O.1

Bill 168 an Act to amend the Occupational Health and Safety Act with respect to violence and harassment in the workplace and other matters. S.O. 2009 Chapter 23

Editor's Notes

Effective June 2010 the ***Occupational Health and Safety Act*** was amended to address issues of workplace harassment and violence. As a result employers are required to develop written policies with respect to workplace violence and maintain a program to implement the policy and to deal with incidents and complaints. In addition the employers must assess the risk of workplace violence and the program must include procedures to control the risks identified in the assessment. For a complete description of the requirements of the amendments see ***Workplace Violence and Harassment: Understanding the Law***. Occupational Health and Safety Branch. Ministry of Labour March 2010. <http://www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/hs/pubs/index.php>.

Plan for Maintaining Security in the Library

1. The library staff will conduct a worksite assessment as often as necessary to ensure measures for violence prevention are effective. The assessment will:
 - a) identify jobs or locations with the greatest risk
 - b) identify high risk factors
 - c) include a physical workplace security audit
 - d) evaluate the effectiveness of existing security measures
2. The CEO, or designate, will annually review the history of past incidents to identify patterns or trends.

Recognized areas of higher risk in the library include:

- a) contact with the public
- b) working alone or in small numbers
- c) the circulation desk where money is kept
- d) closing the library at night
- e) secondary entrances to the library

Measures for reducing the risk.

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1. General

- a) designate the CEO's office and staff room (rooms with doors that lock and phone) as emergency safe rooms
- b) keep all secondary entrance doors locked
- c) kept in good working order the exterior lights around the building
- d) staff will not work alone in the library without prior consent of the CEO

2. Recognize the Signs of Violence

Early identification and prevention of violence in the workplace is encouraged. Potential threats of violence that should be reported could include the following:

- a) threatening statements to do harm to self or others
- b) reference to other incidents of violence
- c) confrontational behaviour
- d) major change in personality, mood or behaviour
- e) substance abuse

3. Steps to Increase Your Personal Safety

1. Notice your surroundings and report any unsafe or dangerous situation to the most senior staff member.
2. If you feel uncomfortable about a person who has entered the library, trust your instincts. If you feel threatened, follow protocol.
3. Use a buddy system when leaving work.
4. If you ever find you are working alone in the library, let the CEO or someone at home, know the situation and tell him or her when you expect to leave.
5. If you enter a bathroom and suspect it is unsafe, don't call out. Back out, go to a safe, lockable place with phone and call for help.
6. Know the nearest exit or room with a lock.

4. Domestic Violence : Steps to Increase Your Personal Safety

1. Tell someone at work about your situation.
2. Make up a "code word" for co-workers so they know when to call for help.
3. Ask your co-workers to screen your calls and visitors.
4. Ask a co-worker to call the police if your abuser is bothering you.

5. Staff Procedures

Threatening Behaviour:

1. Do not argue with a threatening person. Identify yourself as a library staff member. Remain calm and keep your voice low and firm.

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2. Do not put yourself or others in danger. Keep a distance of four feet.
3. Be friendly but firm, introduce yourself, look at the person while you talk to him/her, and let the person talk, clarify the problem and offer solutions.
4. Get assistance from another staff person.
5. Advise him/her that the police will be called if the abuse does not stop.
6. If the behaviour doesn't change call the police.
7. Notify the CEO or designate.

Violence/Assault

1. If you hear raised voices or sounds of a scuffle investigate.
2. If you witness violence or an assault call the police and describe the situation.
3. Recruit other staff to move others out of the way to a safer location.
4. Do not block exits to prevent a threatening/violent person from leaving the building.
5. Do not invade the personal space of the threatening person.
6. Do not get between two people fighting.
7. Notice details so you can describe the situation to the police.
8. Notify the CEO.

How to report

1. A report should be made as soon as possible after an action or behaviour occurred
2. An informal, verbal complaint may be brought forward to the CEO. It is in the best interest of all concerned that a report be written.
3. If a formal complaint is requested, the employee must file a written report with the CEO
4. The report should include a brief statement of the incident, when it occurred, where it occurred, date and time it occurred, the person(s) involved and the names of any witnesses if any.

Investigation and Dealing with Incidents or Complaints

1. After receiving a report the CEO or her designate will complete an investigation as quickly as possible, depending on the nature and severity of the issue. This will include interviews with the employee, the alleged perpetrator, if a staff member, and any witnesses.
2. The results of the investigation will be discussed with the employee and recommended preventative actions and/or resolutions presented.
3. A separate meeting will be held with the alleged perpetrator, if a staff member.
4. If the findings do not support the allegations the CEO will recommend that no further action is necessary and that the matter be closed.
5. Should the investigation conclude that there is evidence of misconduct the CEO will prescribe a resolution that may include police intervention.
6. Employees who are found to have made false or malicious complaints will be subject to disciplinary action.

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The Deseronto Public Library Board is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for workers, volunteers and the public. It recognizes that the Board, librarian(s), library employees and volunteers share the responsibility to ensure a safe and healthy workplace.

1. **Harmful Behavior:** In the event of a patron exhibiting harmful behavior, or potentially harmful behavior, the following steps shall be taken:
 - a. **Removal from Premises**
If members of the staff feel that anyone in the library is in danger of physical harm, or if they have asked a patron to leave and that person refuses, the staff will call the police immediately.
 - b. **Reporting of Incidents**
An incident report should be filled out and submitted to the CEO/Library for review in either case. (see appendix 1)
 - c. **Appeal Procedures**
An evicted patron may appeal to the CEO/Librarian for re-admittance to the library. If the appeal is denied, the patron may then appeal in writing to the Library Board for re-admittance
2. **Disruptive Behavior:** Persons who disturb other library users, damage library property, or conduct themselves in a disorderly or offensive manner may be asked to leave the library premises and may be subject to the penalties prescribed by law. Examples of disorderly or offensive behavior in the library are:
 - a. Leaving young children unattended
 - b. Abuse/vandalism/theft of library property, facilities or equipment
 - c. Eating and drinking, except when provided by the library
 - d. Exhibitionism/flashing
 - e. Harassment – physical, sexual or verbal abuse of other library users or of library staff
 - f. Intoxication resulting from alcohol or drugs
 - g. Loitering, including refusal to leave at closing
 - h. Obscene language

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- i. Smoking
- j. Soliciting for any purpose
- k. Disruptive behavior

3. Loss Prevention

Reasonable security measures will be taken to protect the library against loss of property. If a theft is suspected or observed the CEO/Librarian will take appropriate action.

4. Workplace Harassment

The Deseronto Public Library is committed to providing a working environment in which all staff and volunteers are treated with respect and dignity. The Library also recognizes its responsibility to support and assist staff and volunteers who may have been subjected to workplace harassment. This policy is to ensure a positive and healthy work environment and to insulate the Library from liability. This policy covers all employees, volunteers, summer students and members of the board.

- a. Workplace harassment includes, but is not limited to, any form of discrimination based on gender (including sexual harassment), race, colour, ancestry, place of origin, political belief, religion, marital status, physical or mental disability, age or sexual orientation. Any conduct in the workplace which might cause embarrassment, insecurity, discomfort, offense, or humiliation to another person or group of persons will not be tolerated.
- b. A library employee or volunteer who believes that they have been subjected to workplace harassment is encouraged to report the alleged incident to the CEO/Librarian or to a member of the Library Board. Time limit of one month to reporting a complaint. To protect the interests of the complainant, the alleged harasser, and persons who may report incidents of workplace harassment, confidentiality will be maintained throughout the investigative process. Information relating to the complaint will only be disclosed to the extent necessary to resolve the situation.
- c. In the case of an unsubstantiated complaint, all records of the complaint shall be shredded. Where the complaint has been found valid, the harasser's personnel file shall contain only the details of disciplinary action taken. A separate, confidential file shall be kept for a period of two (2) years unless new circumstances dictate that the file should be kept for a longer period of time. This file should contain all details of the allegations, evidence, and disposition of the matter, and must not be made available to the harasser.
- d. All incidents of harassment should be brought to the attention of the Chairperson.

5. Harassment Procedures

- a. Harassment of a staff member or volunteer by another staff member, volunteer or board member:

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- i. The person who feels they have been harassed shall complete, in as much detail as possible, an Incident Report. (See [Appendix I](#)). Any witnesses to the alleged harassment should add their comments in as much detail as possible.
- ii. The completed report should then be submitted to the CEO/Librarian and the Board Chairperson.
- iii. The Library Board will review the Incident Report. Involved individuals and witnesses may be asked to attend an interview.
- iv. If the board agrees that an incident has occurred, they will tell the harassing individual that the behavior will not be tolerated in the Deseronto Public Library. Suggestions for remedying behavior will be discussed and a letter of disciplinary action will be placed in their personnel file.
- v. The staff member may be suspended without pay for a period of time. The harasser must also apologize, in writing, to the individual who was harassed.
- vi. If the harassing individual is a volunteer, the committee will meet with them and explain that harassment will not be tolerated. The volunteer will be asked to apologize in writing to the individual. Behavior must be remedied if they wish to continue as a volunteer.
- vii. Failure to comply or a repeat of harassment will result in that individual being removed from the volunteer roster. Where a Board member has been the harasser, the resignation of the Board member will be requested.

b. Harassment of a staff member or volunteer by a library user:

- i. At the time of the harassment, the CEO/Librarian will inform the user that harassment will result in suspension of privileges and ask the user to leave the library at that time.
- ii. The claiming to have been harassed individual shall complete, in as much detail as possible, an Incident Report (see [Appendix I, Incident Report](#))
- iii. Any witnesses to the alleged harassment should also provide supporting comments.
- iv. The CEO/Librarian will submit the report(s) to the Library Board for review. The committee may interview the individuals involved, including the user if they are willing.
- v. If an incident has been found to occur, the Library user will be notified by letter, signed by the members of the Library Board, that they have been suspended for a period of time and the reason for the suspension.
- vi. If a second incident of harassment by the same patron occurs, they will be suspended indefinitely. A letter signed by the Chairperson of the Board will be sent to the patron to inform them of this suspension. They will be informed at this time that application for reinstatement must be made to the Board in writing. A user may not necessarily be reinstated.